

THE MENTOR

"A Wise and Faithful Guide and Friend"

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MAKERS OF AMERICAN POETRY

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By *HAMILTON WRIGHT MABIE*

Author of "Books and Culture," "Essays in Literary Interpretation"

MANY people have the idea that poetry is a pleasant but useless form of writing; that it does not have any serious relation to real life; that reading poetry is a delightful recreation for the mind, but not a discipline of the will or a necessity of the spiritual life.

In this country most men and a large number of women are workers. Every day with them, except Sunday and holidays, is a working day. They have something definite to do between nine o'clock in the morning and five o'clock in the afternoon, with an hour or half an hour for luncheon and an occasional holiday, and, if they are fortunate, a short vacation in the summer months. As working people they gain their living, but they do not make their lives; for life is a great deal more than doing work with one's hands and getting food and clothes. These things are necessary, but they are only the beginning of life. We live in our affections, our inter-

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ests, our tastes, our convictions and our principles. Simply to exist is not to live; it is merely to make life possible. Life goes on from the point where we feed and clothe and house ourselves; if we do not get beyond that point we are prisoners.

POETRY AND LIFE

It is the same with nations. This has been called a commercial nation; and many of our critics have told us that in this country we care for nothing but dollars. Our ancestors cared for a great deal more or they would not have come here. Many of them came at the beginning because they loved something more than money; they brought a great many convictions, principles, ideals and a world of sentiment with them; and Americans in every generation, while they have been actively at work with their hands, have kept their hearts above their work. They have never been content with piling up money or making a living by manual work. They have never been afraid of the dangers of pioneer work; of the immense toil of breaking in great farms, building cities and opening mines; but they have worked for independence, for education, for the advancement of their children, for the making of homes; and these are largely matters of sentiment.

It is for this reason that the poets of a nation count for so much in its history. They explain the people to themselves because they reveal what is in the hearts of the people. If by some great calamity every formal history of the English people were destroyed and its poetry remained, it would be easy to reconstruct the story of the development of the English race from its poetry from Chaucer to Kipling. No one can understand what has happened in America unless he reads the American poets. Bryant, Whittier, Lowell, Longfellow and Whitman, Poe and Emerson, have not contributed chapters to a formal history of the United States; but they have each written chapters in a great revelation of what Americans have cared for, have thought about, and have believed in; and they have told the story of the growth of the American spirit.

WHAT IS POETRY

There have been a great many definitions of poetry; but no definition has ever given the whole meaning of the word. Mr. Stedman has told us that "Poetry is rhythmical, imaginative language expressing the invention, taste, thought, passion and insight of the human soul," an awkward but entirely accurate statement; but like every other attempt to put the free spirit and genius of poetry into a phrase, this definition leaves the greater part of the nature of poetry to be made by individual

imagination. Matthew Arnold defined it as a "criticism of life," which is also partial, but has the virtue of condensation and of suggesting the chief characteristic of a great literary form. What the American poets have done has been to express what is in the hearts of Americans in language which has been beautiful, picturesque, powerful, or in some other way memorable.

BRYANT OUR FIRST GREAT POET

Bryant, who was the earliest American to write poetry which had insight, dignity of phrase and was an expression of something real and distinctively American, wrote a prelude to our poetry in "Thanatopsis," which



HOME OF BRYANT AT ROSLYN, LONG ISLAND

was published in the *North American Review* in 1817. The American poets before him, like Francis Hopkinson, had written verses about British policies and British aggression which had the sting of genuine satire, or verse which expressed religious emotion; or poems like "Eutaw Springs," which had grace and sweetness. But Bryant sounded two great notes in "Thanatopsis": the note of human morality, which is as old as the Greek tragedies, and the recognition of the vastness and majesty of the American landscape. From the earliest times poets had been talking about nature, and many true and exquisite things were said of the landscape of Greece, of Sicily, of the older and newer countries. But Bryant was the first



BIRTH PLACE OF WHITTIER AT HAVERHILL, MASS.

poet in the New World to feel the beauty of nature on a vast scale; the majesty and fascination of great forests; of rivers of Continental length. In his verse, always serious with thoughts of human mortality, one finds the vast background of American scenery or the fresh sweetness of American flowers, or the unspoiled charm of the rural landscape.

Bryant was a man of affairs as well as a poet; a journalist deeply interested in the political discussions of his time; an ardent lover of his country, who, when the hour of trial came, sounded the great note of patriotism with the same dignity of style with which he had sounded the note of love of nature. There was something elemental and austere about Bryant. His range was not great; he lacked the fertility of subject and manner of many other poets of his own rank; but he had command of a few of the greatest themes and of a manner which was at once simple and majestic.

WHITTIER THE POET OF SIMPLE LIFE

Whittier lacked the broad culture of Bryant; he could not have translated the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey," as did Bryant in his old age; but he had the best possible education for his work as a poet. He grew up in simple surroundings; he knew the life of the American farmer and of the American village, and the interests that were important to plain men and women were dear to him. He was a man of great simplicity of life, nature, and art; and for that reason he has probably come nearer

more people than any other American poet, and he has been especially a favorite with children. His "Snow-Bound" is in American poetry what Burns' "Cotter's Saturday Night" is in Scotch poetry. It is a classic picture of simple country life in a New England farmhouse of the old type.

Whittier was the poet, not only of plain people, but of simple things; the things which are most common and most dear, and in which men and women of all conditions must find their happiness. He was a Quaker of deeply religious spirit, to whom the "inner voice" spoke often and with great distinctness. Some of his poems of faith are among the most beautiful we have: "Eternal Goodness, a Psalm," for instance. He was also in a special sense the singer of the anti-slavery movement; for he was a passionate lover of human freedom. "Snow-Bound," "Maud Muller," "The Eternal Goodness" are among the most widely-known poems in America.

LONGFELLOW THE POET OF THE HEART

Longfellow, born in a beautiful old New England house, was a graduate of the oldest New England college and became a scholar in the field of language and of literature. He had opportunities of foreign study and travel, and was for many years a professor in Harvard College. The conditions of his life were widely different from the conditions which surrounded Whittier; but he was not less sincere, simple and sympathetic.

No American poet has been more widely popular or more dearly loved; and it has been his great good fortune to find a place in almost every schoolhouse in the country. There are few school festivals in which some poem of Longfellow's does not find a place. This is saying that he was a poet of the heart rather than of the mind; that his verse was of the kind which can be understood by all sorts and conditions of men; and that he interpreted sympathetic with universal emotions and experiences. Longfellow was a singing poet; his rhymes were for the ear rather than for the eye. In this respect he differed from Lowell. He was not less cultivated than Lowell; but he was more sympathetic with the common life; and, though a man of elegant accomplishments, he never ceased to be a man of the people.

It was his happy task, as it was Irving's, to reunite the old and the new; for when these two writers were in their infancy the stirring days of the Revolution were within the recollection of men and women in active life, and the antagonisms of that struggle had not lost their heat. The colonists were alienated in feeling from the mother-country, and the people of the new world were living largely within the limits of their own experience. Longfellow and Irving, by their charming descriptions and



HOME OF LONGFELLOW AT CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

interpretations of historic events and persons and of the scenery of the mother-country, established the continuity of intellectual aspiration between the old and the new world; and once more the hearts of the colonists turned back to the places which their ancestors had loved.

Longfellow may be described as a poet of places and of persons; so often, and with so happy a touch did he bring old cities like Bruges and Nuremberg before the eye, and so constantly did he recall historic incidents and figures. His ample scholarship and his command of the poetic form were evidenced by his fine translation of Dante's "Divine Comedy." His strongest work is seen in some of his ballads and narrative poems: "Sir Humphrey Gilbert," "The Wreck of the Hesperus," "Paul Revere's Ride," "The Launching." Although not a great poem in any sense, "Evangeline" is a very sweet and poetic story in verse. Those who bring the most exacting standards to the judgment of poetry would probably agree in regarding three or four of his sonnets as his most artistic and original work. But the country cares most for his songs: "The Psalm of Life," "The Children's Hour," "The Bridge."

LOWELL THE SCHOLAR POET

There are many writers whose work has a permanent value, but who do not stand out as representative men of letters. Addison, for instance, although not a great writer, was in a striking way, by reason of his wide



HOME OF LOWELL AT CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

interests, his intelligent knowledge of his craft, and the dignity with which he upheld his profession, a representative man of letters. So in America was Lowell. All sorts of good fortune were his; and to him were given many kinds of talents, too many perhaps for his very highest success. He belonged to the old order in New England; an order which meant great simplicity, purity and dignity of character, and fine traditions of intellectual cultivation. He was born in the house in which he died; was graduated at Harvard, which was his near neighbor, and had opportunities of foreign travel of which he made the best possible use. He was a poet, a prose writer, a critic, a humorist and a diplomatist; and he was also in great crises, and by constant habit, a patriotic citizen.

His poetic career began early and lasted until the very end of his life. He was more distinctly a bookish man than Longfellow; and, though a profound believer in popular institutions and at times a passionate American, he was not so much a poet of the domestic affections as Longfellow. That he could write tenderly and beautifully of household experiences is proven by a group of poems, of which "The Changeling" may serve as a type. "The Vision of Sir Launfal," written

early in his career, was a confession of his faith, both as a poet and as an idealist. The "Commemoration Ode," which falls just short of being a great poem, reveals the patriot, the scholar and the singer in the full possession of his power, speaking on a great occasion and rising to the height of a great subject. The few lines in which he commemorates Lincoln register the high-water mark of his genius.

The future may regard humor as Lowell's greatest quality, and "The Biglow Papers" his most original and distinctive contribution to American poetry. They were written in a time of fierce discussion and rising passion; but their good-humored irony, expressed through the Yankee dialect and the Yankee shrewdness of comment, is never bitter and for that reason all the more effective. Lowell had a great love of the Yankee. He understood his character and had a ready command of his forms of speech. "The Courtin'" is in its way one of the most delightful achievements in American verse.

HOLMES POET OF SENTIMENT AND WIT

Lowell was a New Englander who became an American of national sympathies and ideas. Oliver Wendell Holmes was not only a New Englander, but pre-eminently a Bostonian; a man in whom the local genius flowered in the most perfect way. He himself described the class in which he was born as the "Brahmin" class of New England; the people of hereditary cultivation. He was born under the shadow of Harvard,



BIRTHPLACE OF HOLMES AT CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

was graduated from the university, began to study law, as did Bryant and Lowell; but during the few months which he gave to this study flashed out in a poem which made him popular in all parts of the country, "Old Ironsides,"—a passionate plea against the destruction of the frigate "Constitution."

Passing from the law to medicine, Dr. Holmes became an expert and was for thirty-five years a lecturer in the Harvard Medical School. Beginning with no other ambition than that of being an efficient physician, this versatile and fascinating Bostonian developed a number of rare gifts. He became a poet of sentiment and wit, a writer of psychological novels, and the founder of the kind of semi-fiction, semi-essay in which he called himself "the Autocrat." He wrote to Lowell that his life was never monotonous, and that he was a source of surprises to himself. Year after year at the reunion of his college class he appeared with a poem for the occasion; almost always witty, unhackneyed and fresh in feeling. His "The Chambered Nautilus" and "The Last Leaf" belong with the poems which American children learn by heart. "Dorothy Q.," a portrait of one of his ancestors, is a fine example of his ready wit and his tactful and happy phrase; while "The Wonderful One-Horse Shay" will long be a classic of American humor.

WHITMAN THE POET OF DEMOCRACY

Whitman's condition and career stand in striking contrast to those of the New England poets. Whitman had only the scantiest regular education, and was wholly outside the circle of intellectual and social influences which helped to shape the aims and fortunes of his fellow-poets. He was born on the outskirts of opportunity, so to speak. He attended a public school until his thirteenth year and then became a printer. His education came through observation, experience and human intercourse. He became later familiar with the best poetry; but was never in any sense a bookman. The resource of his later years was not reading, but talking. His knowledge of America was not derived from books, either of history or of literature, but from meeting people. A scholar's knowledge is, so to speak, perpendicular; it runs up and down. Whitman's knowledge was horizontal; it ran along the plane of his own age.

Whitman, like Bryant, was an elemental poet. The vastness of the landscape inspired Bryant; the vastness of the popular life liberated the genius of Whitman. His "Leaves of Grass" delighted a few people and shocked many more. There were long stretches of prose in it, but there were also passages of great imaginative power. He regarded himself as a singer of a new order, and he thought his poetry a new departure in verse-making. In this he was partly right and largely wrong.



BIRTHPLACE OF WHITMAN ON LONG ISLAND

In his versification he recalled much of the manner of the early bards or rhapsodists; in his view of life he was a radical Democrat, whose special note was the equality, not only in political opportunity, but in the authority of experience of all men. He was a broad rather than a lofty poet. He loved the comradeship of working men, the ferries, the streets, the omnibuses. He was a man in his shirtsleeves and is represented in his most characteristic early picture with his hands in his pockets and a certain air of swagger which he rarely lost; for he was an egoist and there was a good deal of pose about him. When he set about to work out his theories deliberately he wrote long catalogues which, like some parades, grow monotonous by reason of the unbroken and almost indistinguishable ranks that pass by.

In his most inspired moments he forgot his theories and showed a quality of imagination different from that of any other American poet; something vast and elemental, which conveys through his verse the sense of the great movement of things. In this quality of plastic imagination he holds the first place among American poets. Believing that all things were wholesome, and lacking the gift of reticence, his verse sometimes showed offensive violation of the privacy of nature. At his best, however, he was a man of extraordinary vigor of conception and extraordinary eloquence of phrase. It is too early to predict his final rank; but that he was an original force in American poetry must be evident to all who read the work of the younger poets of today, many of whom would not have written as they are writing had it not been for Whitman.

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

BOOKS ON AMERICAN POETS

Poets of America	<i>Edmund C. Stedman</i>
An American Anthology	<i>Edmund C. Stedman</i>
William Cullen Bryant (Men of Letters Series)	<i>W. A. Bradley</i>
John Greenleaf Whittier (Men of Letters Series)	<i>G. R. Carpenter</i>
Life of Whittier	<i>Bliss Perry</i>
Longfellow (American Men of Letters Series)	<i>T. W. Higginson</i>
Life of James Russell Lowell	<i>Horace E. Scudder</i>
Life and Letters of Oliver Wendell Holmes .	<i>J. T. Morse</i>
Walt Whitman, His Life and Works	<i>Bliss Perry</i>



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THE POE COTTAGE, FORDHAM, NEW YORK



WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT

MAKERS OF AMERICAN POETRY *William Cullen Bryant*

ONE

ONE day, when a package of manuscripts was left at the office of the "North American Review," William Phillips read them to R. H. Dana, who was associated with him as editor. "You have been imposed upon, Phillips," said Dana. "No one on this side the Atlantic is capable of writing such verse." One of these poems was

"Thanatopsis," and it was with difficulty that the editors could be convinced that it was written by a youth of nineteen. William Cullen Bryant was a precocious child. He was born in Cummington, Massachusetts, November 3, 1794, and he knew the alphabet when he was sixteen months old. He was sent to the district school before he was five, and soon thereafter was exploring the large library of his father, Dr. Peter Bryant, a physician of much literary culture and large experience in public affairs.

At fourteen Bryant prepared a collection of poems, which was published the next year. He entered Williams College as a law student when he was sixteen, but left without taking his degree. He practiced law for a time and disliked it exceedingly. His fame as a poet was established when he published his second volume of verse, which contained "The Ages," in 1822.

When he was thirty-one he definitely abandoned the law and went to New York, and the next year he became editor of the "Evening Post," with which paper he was connected until his death. Journalism did not seem to inspire him with any great degree of enthusiasm, for he wrote: "I have given up my profession, which was a shabby one, and I am not

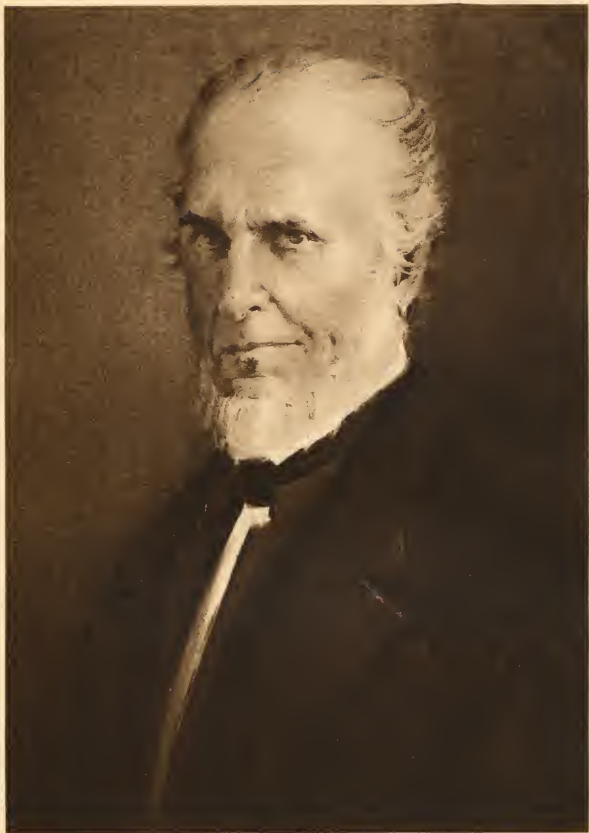
altogether certain that I have got into a better."

Bryant was neither a fluent nor a prolific writer, but an extremely careful one. His manuscripts were so filled with corrections that they could scarcely be read, even by those who knew his handwriting best. He was very strict in his use of English. He once said: "I do not recall an instance where I was tempted to use a foreign word but upon search I have found a better one in my own language."

When he was practicing law at Great Barrington, Massachusetts, he was married. He wrote to his mother: "I have looked only for goodness of heart, an ingenuous and affectionate disposition, a good understanding, etc., and the character of my wife is too frank and single-hearted to suffer me to fear that I may be disappointed."

For many years Bryant was the most distinguished man in New York, in appearance and in honor. He traveled much abroad. His feats in walking were the astonishment of those who knew him. Even at eighty few young men could keep up with him in his walks.

He died in 1878, at the age of eighty-three, from the result of a fall. His last works of importance were translations of the "Iliad" and "Odyssey", which many American critics rank above any that had appeared up to that time in English.



JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

MAKERS OF AMERICAN POETRY

John Greenleaf Whittier

TWO



WHEN William Lloyd Garrison, then twenty-one, was editing the "Free Press," a weekly paper in Newburyport, Massachusetts, there came to him a poem called "The Exile's Departure," which interested the editor so much that he not only printed it with a eulogy, but drove over to Haverhill to meet the author. There he

found Whittier living in the house in which he was born, and which had been built by his ancestor, Thomas Whittier, in the seventeenth century. Whittier was born in 1807, the same year as Longfellow.

Garrison found that the poem which had aroused his admiration had been submitted by Whittier's sister without her brother's knowledge. The editor told the father, a farmer, whose independence was greater than his means, that his son should receive a good education. It was contrary to the practice of the Friends to acquire literary culture, but it was finally decided that the tall, slight country boy should enter Haverhill Academy. He worked his way through the academy.

When his school days ended, he worked on Boston newspapers for a year and a half; then his father's illness compelled him to return to the farm. Later he secured an editorial position in Hartford, where he published his first book, "Legends of New England," in prose and verse; but ill health compelled him to return home and remain four years.

He became interested in politics and decided on that as his career, but his own temperament and his association with William Lloyd Garrison, which continued all his life, made him join the anti-slavery cause, although he realized that it would kill his political chances. For a Quaker

he displayed a lively fighting spirit in action, argument and song. He wrote many poems, which are now known as the "Voices of Freedom," which made him widely known but brought him little money.

He is described by one who saw him at an Anti-Slavery Convention as wearing a "frock coat with standing collar; he had thin hair, dark and sometimes flashing eyes, and black whiskers, not large but noticeable in those unbrushe days, which gave him quite as much of a military as a Quaker's appearance."

The following year he published in the *Liberator* a strong anti-slavery poem, of which Garrison said: "Our gifted brother Whittier has again seized the great trumpet of liberty and blown a blast that shall ring from Maine to the Rocky Mountains."

The year after the war he published "Snowbound," the best of his works, in which he describes the Haverhill homestead so exquisitely. This homestead is now held as a memorial to the poet, as is also the Amesbury house, in which the family lived after they left Haverhill. This latter was bought by the Whittier Home Association and is preserved as a shrine.

After the war Whittier lived very quietly and peacefully. He died in New Hampshire at the age of eighty-five.



JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

MAKERS OF AMERICAN POETRY *James Russell Lowell*

THREE

SO badly had the business of living gone with James Russell Lowell that, when he was about twenty, he decided to end it all. He even held a cocked pistol to his forehead, but he had not the courage to pull the trigger. Not long after that he met Miss Maria White, a frail woman with a fine mind, a poet of delicate power, of high

ideals and splendid courage. Lowell married her when he was twenty-five, and it was then that he found himself.

He was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1819. His father was a Unitarian minister and a graduate of Harvard. His mother's people came from the Orkney Islands, and as a child she taught him the ballads and folk-lore of the North of Scotland.

From the time he was nineteen, when he was graduated from Harvard, Lowell knew ten very unhappy years. He made a precarious living practising law, which he hated, and he received very little for his contributions to the magazines, which took up a large part of his time; but for all that he decided to devote himself to literature. He started a magazine called "The Pioneer," which lasted for three numbers. Toward the close of 1843 he published a collection of poems, and a year later, "Conversations on Some of the Old Poets," which the critical praised, but the public did not buy.

Those were melancholy days for Lowell. The invalidism of his wife, the death of his two young children, his mother's mental illness and his small income made him almost a recluse. It was under these conditions that he wrote what is perhaps his finest poem, "The Vision of Sir Launfal," in which he says:

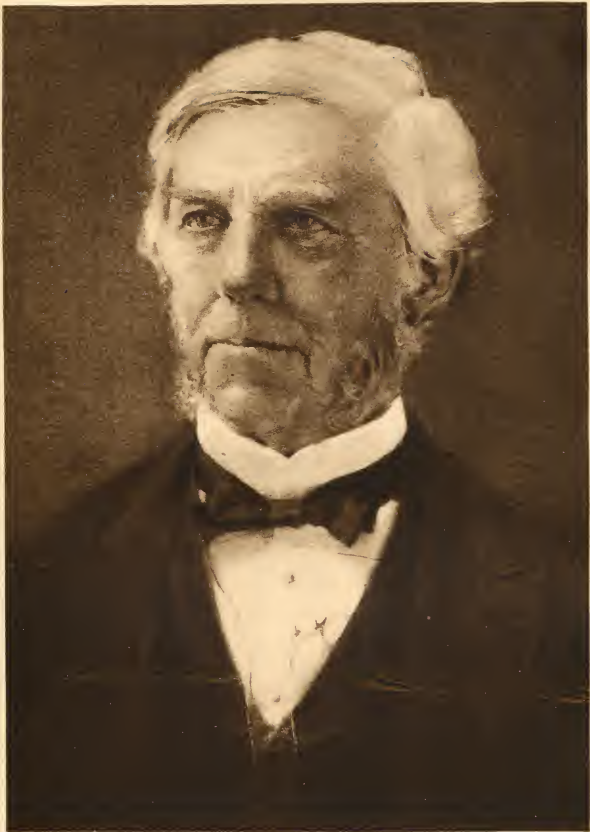
And what is so rare as a day in June?

Then, if ever, come perfect days;
Then Heaven tries the earth if it be in tune
And over it softly her warm ear lays.
Whether we look or whether we listen,
We hear life murmur or see it glisten.

There followed the "Biglow Papers," the humorous, satirical verses, which brought him general fame. The success of the "Biglow Papers" marked the turning point of the tide in Lowell's fortunes.

He became the first editor of the "Atlantic Monthly," which was established in 1857. He succeeded Longfellow as Professor of Modern Languages and Literature at Harvard, and occupied the chair for twenty years, when he became minister to Spain under President Hayes. He was transferred to the court of St. James in 1880 and remained there five years. His position was one of great honor and distinction.

He was recognized as America's foremost man of letters, and all manner of degrees were showered upon him. After he resigned from the diplomatic service, Lowell devoted himself to writing and to travel. He died at Elmhurst, the Cambridge house in which he was born, on October 12, 1891.



OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

MAKERS OF AMERICAN POETRY

Oliver Wendell Holmes

FOUR

FINER than the honor given Oliver Wendell Holmes as a poet, as a writer of prose, as a physician, was the glory of being one of the best loved men in America. His whole life was crowded full of splendid activities, of the joy of living. He bubbled over with humor and wisdom, with enthusiasm, to the day of his

death; and he lived to be eighty-five years old.

The son of a clergyman, Holmes was born in Cambridge, August 29, 1809; and was prepared for college at Phillips' Andover Academy, where he made his first attempt at verse, a translation from the "Aeneid." He was graduated from Harvard at twenty and the following year he published "Old Ironsides," which made him widely known and which saved the old frigate "Constitution" from destruction.

His activities were amazing. In addition to his large practice as a physician, his duties as a professor, he found time to produce much literary work. Apparently no public function in the way of a dinner or meeting was complete unless Dr. Holmes read an original poem written for the occasion, and he seems to have been equal to every demand upon him. Also he was in great demand as a lecturer. His terms were modest, but specific. He said:

"My terms for a lecture when I stay over night are \$15 and expenses, a room in a public house, and a mattress to sleep on—not a feather-bed."

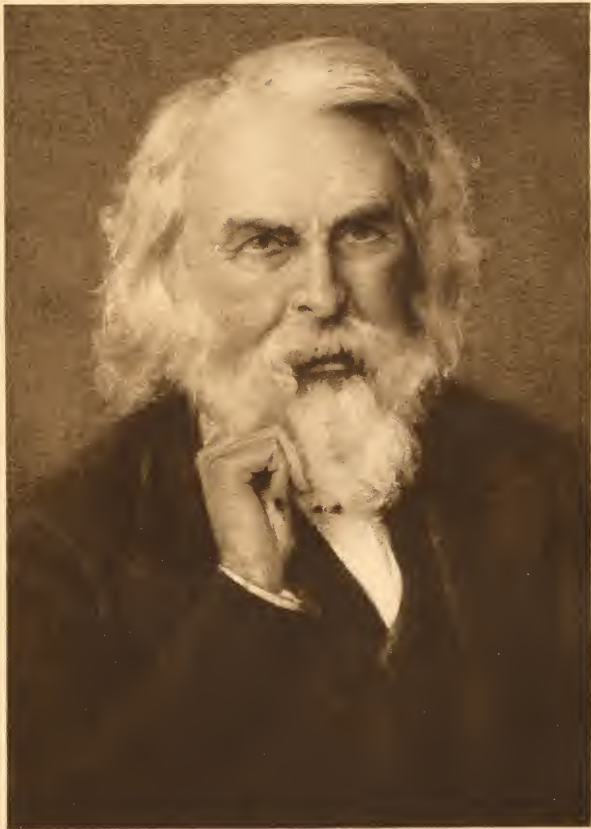
He was one of the distinguished group that was interested in the "Atlantic Monthly," the publication that played so

important a part in the development of New England literature. In fact, Holmes suggested the name. It was in the "Atlantic" that Holmes published the "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," his most celebrated work, which it is said really made the success of the magazine possible.

The doctor was a slender little man, who usually wore a tall silk hat and carried a cane. He was quick and nervous in his movements, and conveyed in speaking the impression of energy and intense vitality, and yet he had a poet's sensitiveness to noise and a dread of persons of superabundant vitality and aggressiveness.

The humorous poetry of Holmes is most widely known, particularly "The Deacon's Masterpiece," which recounts the story of the "wonderful one-horse shay." He himself believed that the "Chambered Nautilus," which appears in the "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," was his best poem, and indeed it is exquisitely beautiful. But when he was about twenty-six, he wrote a poem which called forth this tribute from President Lincoln:

"There are some quaint, queer verses, written I think by Oliver Wendell Holmes, entitled 'The Last Leaf.' For pure pathos, in my judgment, there is nothing finer than those lines in the English language."



HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

MAKERS OF AMERICAN POETRY

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

FIVE



WHILE he was living Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poems were translated into eighteen languages, including Sanskrit and Chinese, a distinction enjoyed by no other poet of the nineteenth century. After he died a bust of him was placed in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey, and he was the first American poet to be so

honored. Moreover, his whole life was singularly calm, happy, distinguished. One of his great trials was the crowd of visitors who insisted upon coming to his home to do him honor.

There is a fine old house in Portland, where Longfellow was born February 27, 1807, now a kind of museum to his memory. His father was Stephen Longfellow, a lawyer of distinction. Longfellow's boyhood was very like that of the extremely good youth described in old-fashioned story-books. He was cheerful, attractive, one of the best boys in school. The first book he owned was Irving's "Sketch Book." "Everybody has a first book, which fascinates his imagination and satisfies the desires of his mind," he afterwards said.

At thirteen Longfellow began to write verse. At fourteen he passed the entrance examinations to Bowdoin College; he entered the following year. Among his classmates was Nathaniel Hawthorne, with whom he formed a lifelong friendship.

After he was graduated it was arranged that he should go to Europe to fit himself for the chair of Modern Languages, which had been established at Bowdoin. He remained abroad two years and at

twenty-one became a professor at a salary of \$800 a year.

In 1835, he became a member of the Harvard faculty. The atmosphere at Cambridge revived his desire to write poetry. The "Psalm of Life," published in 1838, established his fame. "Hyperion" was published in 1839, and four years later Longfellow married the original of Mary Ashburton of that story, with the "deep, unutterable eyes." She was "a lady of Junonian beauty and the kindest heart," and she was comfortably rich in her own right.

"Evangeline" appeared when the poet was forty years old. He resigned his professorship when he was forty-seven, after eighteen years of service, and immediately set to work on "Hiawatha."

The last twenty years of Longfellow's life were passed very quietly in Cambridge, where he was recognized as its first citizen, holding a position of honor and reverence.

Longfellow died in Cambridge on March 15, 1882. Oliver Wendell Holmes said of him: "His life was so exceptionally sweet that any voice of praise sounds like a discord after it."



WALT WHITMAN



ELL, he looks like a man," said President Lincoln when he met Walt Whitman, who was six feet two, broad of shoulder, with a flowing gray beard that never had been shaved. But even then the great physical strength of him whom the world knows as "the Good Gray Poet"—his hair and beard turned before he was thirty—

was being sapped by his tremendous exertions for the sick and wounded soldiers in the Civil War.

He loved people, human beings, especially those who worked. No man ever lived closer to the soil than Whitman.

Whitman was born at Huntington, Long Island, in 1819. His father was a carpenter who was always busy but never prosperous. His Dutch mother had a wonderful talent for story telling, but it was an ordeal for her to write a letter. When Walt was four, his father moved to Brooklyn and his boyhood was passed near the wharves. He worked in a lawyer's office when he was eleven, and was put to the printer's trade when he was thirteen.

He gave so much time to dreaming, to reading novels—chiefly Scott, Fenimore Cooper, the Arabian Nights—that he was regarded as lazy. "If he had the ague he would be too lazy to shake," said one of his employers.

When he was twenty-five he became editor of the "Brooklyn Eagle." Three years later he accepted an editorship in New Orleans. He remained there only a little while.

After his return to Brooklyn he went into business with his father and pros-

pered. He was confronted with the possibility of becoming rich—so he straightway abandoned business. All these years he had been thinking, dreaming. The prospect of wealth was the turning point.

He gave up business and began on his original poetry, without rhyme, without meter, yet with a certain rhythm, a wealth of ideas, a grandeur of conception. He recited it aloud on Broadway, on the ferries, and in lonely places. He went to work in a printing shop and set up "Leaves of Grass" himself. It contained twelve poems, including "The Song of Walt Whitman." It was received with ribald laughter or with angry abuse.

In those days Whitman had two classes of friends—the utterly disreputable and the very great—Emerson, Bryant, Henry Ward Beecher. In Europe the foremost minds in literature, Carlyle among them, placed Whitman on a pedestal higher than any of his countrymen. But in his own land he was vilified and ridiculed almost to the day of his death.

After the Civil War Whitman remained in Washington as a Government clerk until 1873. His health failed and he went to Camden, New Jersey, and there "the Good Gray Poet" lived in peace and comfort, and there he died in 1892.

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CLASSICS

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